BLACK WIDOW FILES
THE EARLY YEARS

...Stalingrad, Russia, 1928 — from the rubble of a blown-out, burning building, the infant Natalia Romanova was lifted to safety into the arms of Ivan Petrovich.

...Ten years later, Stalin himself took the girl from Ivan's loving care and turned her over to the master spy Taras Romanoff.

...Convinced by Romanoff she was his daughter, "Natasha Romanoff" took to his school's training eagerly, soaking up the tools of the spy trade: stealth strategies, self-defense, knifeplay, information trading.

...There, she met a would-be pupil of Taras, the drifter Logan, from whom she learned hand-to-hand combat, tracking, and no-holds-barred, martial arts. She also learned her first lesson in betrayal: her "father" Taras had secretly assigned her to kill Logan, though her adopted "Little Uncle" Logan killed Taras first, fulfilling his mission of assassination. [1]

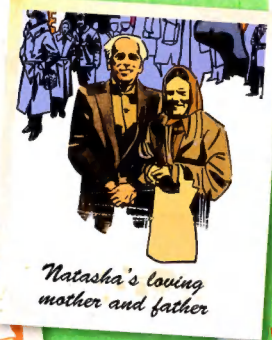
...Taras Romanoff's death was a massacre. In it, she learned the ultimate lesson: love and loyalty are of great value, and thus a great bargaining chip.

...She was found wandering the Siberian wilderness by Ivan Petrovich and taken back into his custody. By this time, the girl, barely a teenager, was proficient in the art of the assassin and the craft of the spy – proven by her mission to kill the leader of the ninja clan the Hand, the Jonin, in 1941 at Madripoor.

....Natasha found herself allied with Captain America and brushed up once again with Logan and his life's disorienting patterns. His experience would be an object lesson for the girl's future, though she could not know it at the time.... [2,3]

[1] **Wolverine: Origins Vol. 2 – Savior HC/TP**
[2] **Marvel Visionaries: Chris Claremont HC**
[3] **Wolverine: Origins Vol. 4 – Our War HC/TP**

BLACK WIDOW FILES
THE RED ROOM



...At some point after this epochal event in her life, Natasha fell under the sway of Lyudmila Kudrin, scientist, Soviet, and svengali of the Black Widow Program. Along with dozens of other orphaned teen girls, Natasha received an intense regimen of biology-enhancing chemicals – not unlike America's Super-Soldier serum – that gave her an extra-human immune system and heightened endurance levels.

...The dark side of the Red Room came in the form of a cascade of false memories: parents that were not hers, friends that never existed, a career as a Bolshoi ballerina that never happened, and a patriotic zeal for her homeland (enhanced by brainwashing and pheromone-like chemicals) that was merely a tool for further manipulation.

...Combined with the training she'd already received from Taras Romanoff and her "Little Uncle" Logan, Natasha's Red Room skills set her on the path to become one of the world's top stealth agents. [1]

...Berlin, 1956: Natasha and her loyal caretaker, Ivan Petrovich, were victims of a savage beating. With Ivan near death, both were given the gift of a life-prolonging chemical from the Russian agent Winter Soldier (Bucky Barnes). Shortly thereafter, she and Barnes became lovers.

...By 1958, she was forced to break off relations with the Winter Soldier, and married Alexei Shostakov, Russian test pilot and national hero. Despite the marriage being an orchestration of the Kremlin, Natasha fell deeply in love with Alexei. Thus, when she was informed by her overseers that her husband had died in an experimental rocket test, Natasha was devastated, and threw herself into her new duties as a Soviet superspy and saboteur... [2]

[1] **Black Widow: Homecoming TP**
[2] **Avengers Masterworks Vol. 5 HC**

With the Crimson Dynamo against Iron Man

OH, MY DARLING! DID YOU THINK I WOULD EVER HARM YOU... OR EVER TURN AGAINST YOU...??
IT WAS THE REDS! THEY BRAINWASHED ME INTO BETRAYING YOU!

Hawkeye: Love or manipulation?

BLACK WIDOW FILES
SPY & SABOTEUR

...Over the next decades, Natasha flitted about the European social scene, drawing brilliant and wealthy tech developers into her web and then siphoning their secrets to her Soviet bosses. It was only natural that at some point she would set her sights on the most brilliant and wealthy of them all – Tony Stark.

...Spurning her romantic advances, Stark earned the impetuous wrath of the Black Widow. With the costumed rogue Hawkeye alongside to help her bring down Stark Enterprises, she waged a campaign of harassment against the billionaire technologist and his armored bodyguard, Iron Man, and took every opportunity to sabotage his facilities. (1)

...Her romance with Hawkeye started as a simple manipulation of the impressionable young man on behalf of her Communist employers. But when the villain went legit as a member of the Avengers, the Black Widow defected and followed him over to the side of good once and for all. Emerging from a brainwashing that forced her to set the Swordsman and Power Man against the Avengers, she bonded with Hawkeye and established an uneasy relationship with the wary team. (2)

...Convinced of her skills as a super spy, Nick Fury drafted her into S.H.I.E.L.D. as a freelance agent. She uncovered a plot by the Sons of the Serpent and aided the Avengers against the Ultroids. But she also discovered that her "late" husband Alexei Shostakov was alive as the Soviet super hero, the Red Guardian. The shock of her brush with Alexei sent her into a deep reflection about her future, and she retired from the Avengers before they could place her on the team roster... (3)

(1) **Essential Iron Man Vol. 1 TP/ Iron Man Omnibus Vol. 1 HC**
(2) **Avengers Masterworks Vol. 3 HC**
(3) **Avengers Masterworks Vol. 4 HC**

BLACK WIDOW FILES
THE SUPER HERO LIFE

...The Black Widow emerged from her breakup with Hawkeye and the Avengers with a newfound purpose: to fight crime using her formidable skills. She practiced her new pursuit against Spider-Mah, trying to take his measure as a super hero while donning a trendy new all-black costume. [1]

...Next, with longtime aide Ivan Petrovich by her side, she fought the super villains the Astrologer and Watchlord, and on behalf of a band of youthful community organizers. [1]

...Emboldened by her initial forays at fighting crime, she and Ivan left New York City for San Francisco, where a series of events led to her teaming up with blind super hero, Daredevil, himself a recent émigré to the West Coast. It was the beginning of a long relationship with Matt Murdock, one in which they eventually became lovers.

... After a brief relocation to New York City and a fight alongside the Avengers, she was granted membership by the team. This did not last, however, nor did her relationship with Daredevil. [2] After growing apart from her lover, she left San Francisco for Los Angeles, where she took over the leadership of the Champions, an ad hoc group of crime fighters including Ghost Rider, Iceman, Angel and eventual lover, Hercules. [3]

...The Champions folded, and Natasha was back in action for S.H.I.E.L.D. against Iron Maiden [4], reunited with Daredevil to fight Bullseye [5], and also fought with her former lover against the Hand, the ninja clan bent of resurrecting Elektra. [6]

(1) **Black Widow: The Sting of the Widow HC**
(2) **Essential Daredevil Vol. 4-5 TP**
(3) **Champions Classic Vol. 2-3 TP**
(4) **Black Widow: Web of Intrigue HC**
(5) **Daredevil Visionaries: Frank Miller Vol. 1 TP**
(6) **Daredevil Visionaries: Frank Miller Vol. 3 TP**

BLACK WIDOW FILES
THE NEW BLACK WIDOW

The Widow and the Devil's Child

Widows Romanoff and Belova

New model Natasha

... Natasha closed down the first phase of her super hero life as leader of the Avengers. After a long association with the team, the leadership was finally hers. It was under her command, however, when several of her teammates were seemingly killed in action. It would be revealed later that her teammates had been shunted off to an alternate universe, but during the time they were missing, it was the Black Widow who had to shut down the activities of Earth's Mightiest Heroes. (1)

...Stung by her failure, she descended into depression and erratic behavior. Reuniting with Daredevil didn't help much, as she was soon drafted into the role of protector of an infant child her former lover had decided was the Anti-Christ and seemingly hell-bent on killing. (2)

...Natasha's life was about to get further complicated. Dropping out of the super hero life, abandoning her venom blasters and other super hero accoutrements, she reentered the world of spying and international intrigue. It wasn't long before she became aware of a new Black Widow, the Red Room graduate Yelena Belova. Though not as experienced as her idol, Belova was far more aggressive and tenaciously desirous of supplanting Natasha as the premier Black Widow. Thinking the girl dangerously callow, Natasha hatched a plot to take her appearance and drive her mad, the better to caution the girl into slowing down her foolhardy pursuit of glory. (3)

...Episodes like these showcased the new side of Black Widow: hard-bitten, world-weary and not ready to suffer fools. Though very desirous of retirement from the super hero game, action kept calling her name. During missions to Russia and Cuba, she discovered the secrets of her Red Room tutelage under Lyudmila Kudrin, then tracked down the misuse of Kudrin's biotechnology in a Cuban slave mill run by the Gynacon pharmaceutical corporation... (4,5)

(1) **Avengers Assemble Vol. 2 HC**
(2) **Daredevil: Guardian Devil HC/TP**
(3) **Black Widow TP**
(4) **Black Widow: Homecoming TP**
(5) **Black Widow: The Things They Say About Her TP**

BLACK WIDOW FILES
THE DEADLIEST DAYS

(1) **Civil War HC**
(2) **Mighty Avengers Assemble HC**
(3) **Captain America: The Death of Captain America Omnibus HC**
(4) **Reborn HC**
(5) **Invincible Iron Man Vol. 1 HC**
(6) **Black Widow: Deadly Origin HC**

...The last few years have been the most turbulent in the life of Natasha Romanoff. With a skill set such as hers, the world of super heroes is always pulling her back in to make use of her expertise and relentlessness. When the call for super-powered beings to register with the United States government gained steam, Iron Man became the spokesman for the pro-Registration side. And Black Widow joined him, fighting against the likes of Spider-Man, Luke Cage and Captain America. (1)

...With victory in the Civil War behind him, Iron Man reconstituted the Avengers, assembling a dream team of heroes including Ms. Marvel, Ares, Sentry and Black Widow. In the team's first adventures, they faced the return of Ultron and the onset of the Skrull invasion. (2)

...After the apparent assassination of Steve Rogers, in the wake of his arrest for crimes related to the Civil War, Black Widow came across her old love, Bucky Barnes, now returned as the Winter Soldier and seeking justice against the killer of Captain America. Swept up in the drama alongside Barnes, who would eventually don the costume and wield the shield of his mentor, Steve Rogers, Black Widow has been the most ardent fighting companion of the new Captain America. And just as they rekindled the long-dormant love they had once shared with each other, the Black Widow and the new Captain America also helped restore Steve Rogers' consciousness to his body, foiling the Red Skull's twisted plot. (3, 4)

...But now, after aiding Pepper Potts and Maria Hill in their race to save the life of Tony Stark (5), the Black Widow has come face to face with the reality of her unforgiving origin; the extent to which her past has haunted her in the form of a deadly disease afflicted upon her by one of her most trusted friends. How she will recover emotionally from this revelation, to rebound in time to face down Norman Osborn's Siege or take on any other new threats, will be one of the most deadly webs Natasha has ever had to untangle...

Written by **John Rhett Thomas**
Design by **Michael Kronenberg**

BLACK WIDOW (ISSN #2153-3245) **No. 1, June, 2010.** Published Monthly by MARVEL WORLDWIDE, INC., a subsidiary of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT, LLC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 417 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10016. **APPLICATION TO MAIL PERIODICAL POSTAGE RATES IS PENDING AT NEW YORK, NY AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.** © 2010 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters featured in this issue and the distinctive names and likenesses thereof, and all related indicia are trademarks of Marvel Characters, Inc. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. $3.99 per copy in the U.S. (GST #R127032852) on the direct market and $3.99 per copy in the U.S. and $3.99 in Canada (GST #R127032852) through the newsstand; Canadian Agreement #40668537. **Printed in the USA.** Subscription rate (U.S. dollars) for 12 issues: U.S. $27.00; Canada $37.00; Foreign $39.00. **POSTMASTER: SEND ALL ADDRESS CHANGES TO BLACK WIDOW, C/O MARVEL SUBSCRIPTION DEPT. P.O. BOX 5187 BRENTWOOD, TN 37024. TELEPHONE # (800) 217-9158. FAX # (615) 377-0525. subscriptions@marvel.com.** ALAN FINE, EVP - Office Of The President, Marvel Worldwide, Inc. and **EVP & CMO** Marvel Characters B.V.; DAN BUCKLEY, Chief Executive Officer and Publisher - Print, Animation & Digital Media; JIM SOKOLOWSKI, Chief Operating Officer; DAVID GABRIEL, SVP of Publishing Sales & Circulation; DAVID BOGART, SVP of Business Affairs & Talent Management; MICHAEL PASCIULLO, VP of Merchandising & Communications; JIM O'KEEFE, VP of Operations & Logistics; DAN CARR, Executive Director of Publishing Technology; JUSTIN F. GABRIEL, Director of Publishing & Editorial Operations; SUSAN CRESPI, Editorial Operations Manager; ALEX MORALES, Publishing Operations Manager; STAN LEE, Chairman Emeritus. For information regarding advertising in Marvel Comics or on Marvel.com, please contact Ron Stern, VP of Business Development, at rstern@marvel.com. For Marvel subscription inquiries, please call 800-217-9158.